

Upheaval in the East: Momentum of the Baltic

Lithuania Steps Up Drive to Leave Soviet Union

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Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Feb. 28 — The republic of Lithuania stepped up its campaign to leave the Soviet Union today, announcing a new round of parliamentary elections in concern that President Mikhail S. Gorbachev will soon have stronger emergency powers to oppose secession.

"Maybe he will try some trick," Algimantas Cekuolis, a leader of the Sajudis

dispopular front movement, said of the Soviet leader. Sajudis seeks to restore the independence that Lithuania lost in forced Soviet annexation 50 years ago.

Lithuanian separatists announced the decision to move up run-off elections for the republic's new Parliament by one week, to Sunday, in a race with President Gorbachev's own plan to have enlarged executive powers granted by the national Congress of Peoples Deputies in mid-March.

Lithuanian politicians revised their plans so they could have a full 141-member republic parliament elected in time to convene next week. Ninety members were elected on Sunday, with runoffs required for the other seats.

The new parliament is being elected in the nation's first multiparty elections in seven decades, with most local Communist leaders already having decided to join a Communist Party that took part in the Lithuanian wave of nationalism and declared its independ-

ence from the central Communist Party, led by President Gorbachev, in December.

Sajudis strategists plan to install a new republic government through the separatist-minded Parliament and end the dominance of Lithuanian affairs by the national government and Communist Party. After that they hope to negotiate with the Gorbachev Government on various details for a restoration of independence.

Mr. Gorbachev is opposed to secession. Lithuanians say they are concerned that the central Government might rush to legislate tighter restrictions on republics exercising the exist-

ing right of secession theoretically guaranteed in the Soviet Constitution.

The move now seems possible as early as next week, as separatists seek to change the republic's government before the special session of the national Congress of People's Deputies on March 12 and 13. The deputies are expected to grant Mr. Gorbachev stronger powers to declare emergencies and assume control of local affairs.

"We want to keep one jump ahead of Moscow and convene our Parliament," said Mr. Cekuolis. "We just want to play it safe."



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In a counterdemonstration in the Lithuanian capital, women showed their support for independence.